

BASIC ELEMENTS OF ANALYSING LANGUAGE AND GRAMMAR

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Language is like an onion bulb with many layers. The ‘existence’ of the outer layers is dependent on the presence of the inner layers. Similarly, the inner layers depend on the outer layers for protection. Language is conceived as “the totality of utterances that can be made in a speech community” (Chomsky, 1986:16) or “a system of conventional signs all aspects of whose structure serve the sovereign function of meaning” (Cruse, 1990:140). For any language, especially English – our focus in this chapter – to be meaningful, it has to be grammatical. Grammatical correctness is thus a prerequisite, a *sine-qua-non* of sort, to any functional discourse. Grammar, one of the most important “aspects” or levels of linguistic study, is the body of descriptive statements about the morphological and syntactic structures of a particular language (Osisanwo, 1999:1) as it deals primarily with the rules that govern the combinations of words and groups of words to bring about meaningful sentences (Eka, 1994:1).

Just like language under which it is subsumed, grammar is also hierarchical or systemic. The elements of this hierarchy are morphemes, words, phrases, clauses and sentences otherwise known as members of the grammatical rank scale. Our aim in this chapter is to explore the foundation of grammar, focusing on the elements of morphemes and words after a cursory look at the levels of linguistic analysis: phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics. At the end of the chapter, we hope to have brought to the fore the rudiments of morphology and morphological processes with which the understanding of the higher systems of grammatical rank scale become enhanced and of course, provided a bird’s eye-view of the language phenomenon.

2.0 LEVELS OF LANGUAGE ANALYSIS

Like the onion bulb, language exhibits different levels. These levels of linguistic analysis are not mutually exclusive. Phonemes combine to form morphemes and words, and words combine to form sentences on which meanings are superimposed as constrained by the context. Hence, while phonology, morphology and syntax are levels of linguistic abstractions, the levels of semantics and pragmatics concretize them by making them meaningful and appropriate, and thus, satisfying the essence of language.

2.1 PHONOLOGY

Phonology is a primary level of linguistic analysis which essentially

deals with the study of speech sounds and how they are organized into a system of a given language. Traugott and Pratt (1980:56) see phonology as a branch of linguistics which identifies the distinctive sound units in a language and how these units combine to form a sequence. In other words, phonology studies how speech sounds are structured to function meaningfully in a language, as sound rudiments are instrumental to meaningfulness and meaning differentiation.

There are two major branches of phonology. These are segmental and suprasegmental phonology. Segmental phonology pre-occupies itself with identification, description and analysis of basic sound units and their patterns. At this level, vowels and consonants are considered as major classes of segmental phonemes. The vowel class has three sub-classes, namely: monophthongs (pure vowels), diphthongs and triphthongs. Monophthongs are articulated at one point in the oral passage. There are twelve of them in English and they include /i:, I, e, æ, a:, É, É:, u, u:, L, 3: and ʌ/. There are eight diphthongs in English and these are produced as the articulator glides from one point of the oral passage towards another. They are /eI, aI, ÉI, ʌu, au, Iʌ, eʌ and uʌ/. Triphthongs present themselves as the most complex type of vowels because they can be difficult to recognize and pronounce. Roach (1991:23) describes a triphthong as a glide from one vowel to another and then towards the third one. Some writers describe triphthongs in English as comprising five closing diphthongs (i.e. eI, aI, ÉI, ʌu, and au) and the schwa sound /ʌ/ in succession; hence, the following triphthongs result: /eIʌ, aIʌ, ÉIʌ, ʌuʌ and auʌ/. A point worthy of note is that all vowel sounds are voiced, i.e. articulated with vocal vibration. Consonants on the other hand are sounds which are produced with partial or total obstruction of the air passage. Unlike vowels, consonants can either be voiced or voiceless. The voiced consonants in English include /b, g, d, m, n, h, ð, z, v, d₃, ʒ, r, l/ and the

voiceless ones are /p,t,k,s,f,q,s, ts, h,w,j/.

The suprasegmental level of phonology concerns itself with features which accompany combination of phonemes into meaningful sound bits of a language. Prominent under this classification are stress (the prosodic feature of syllable), rhythm (the prosodic feature of foot) and intonation (the prosodic feature of tone group). A diagrammatic representation of the phonological levels and classes is presented as follows:

2.2 **MORPHOLOGY**

This is a level of language analysis which deals with the internal arrangement of words and their inflections. It seeks to analyze, describe and classify meaningful grammatical units and how these units (morphemes) are organized in the process of word formation. In other words, morphology is a branch of linguistics which preoccupies itself with word formation rules, which in turn determine the organization of the internal structures of words into minimal meaningful units of grammatical analysis. Morphology can either be inflectional or derivational. The major word formation process is affixation. This occurs through prefixation, infixation and suffixation depending on where the morphemal element is introduced into the structure of a word.

Other word formation processes include compounding, clipping, acronym, reduplicative, blending, conversion, nonce formation and neologism. See section 3.1 for an extensive consideration of morphology and its processes.

2.3 **SYNTAX.**

Syntax is essentially the grammar of a language as it specifies the rules which govern the arrangement of words into phrases, clauses and sentences. Words are not randomly arranged or combined in languages. Instead, they follow a linearly structured order. The organization of words into larger grammatical stretches follows rules which language users internalize for construction of structured and orderly sentences that can be understood. Such structural rules culminate into the syntax of a language. English, like any other language of the world, exhibits certain grammatical features which ensure syntactic well-formedness of its structures. The grammatical hierarchy on which syntactic rules are tenable starts from the level of morpheme, through word, phrase and clause up to the sentential level in an ascending order such that the category on top subsumes the one below it. This idea is represented in the diagram that follows.

Syntax concerns itself with grammatical rules and realizations, specifically with division of structures and constituents into segments and categories either upward or downward the rank scale of grammar.

2.4 **SEMANTICS**

Linguists and philosophers have identified three different ways of conducting explanation of meaning in a language. These are by defining the nature of word meaning, by defining the nature of

sentence meaning and through the explication of communication process (Kempson, 1977:11). The essence of any language is its meaningfulness. The study of meaning both in general theoretical terms and in reference to specific language is known as semantics. Semantics is a wide sub-discipline of linguistics which refers to the study of meaning. It borders on the analysis and description of symbols in relation to the senses they signal. The question now remains: can all types of meaning be negotiated independent of the context? No! This explains why Lyons (1995:40), from a philosophical point of view, identifies six basic theories of meaning as referential, ideational, behaviourist, meaning-in-use, verificationist and truth-conditional. None of these theories, according to him, will serve as a basis for comprehensive and scientific theory of semantics in isolation of one or more of others. The implication here is that both the concept and the context are necessary ingredients in situating, empirically and precisely, meanings of utterances as used.

From the foregoing, the following goals of semantics are deducible.

1. Semantics should attempt to explain how words and utterances are used in a language to convey meaning. If the word “bank” is used in a sentence like “I visited the bank”, this may not convey a unique meaning unless the totality of the context is considered.
2. Semantics also attempts to explain how words and utterances in a language are understood. It is only through a consideration of the nuances of communication that an utterance like “she is a pig” can be understood.
3. Semantics deals with how words and utterances are connected to one another such that no contradiction is generated. For instance, “John is a bachelor because she is unmarried” will be considered semantically. “The man who died yesterday will be married tomorrow” is also semantically void.
4. Semantics seeks to relate words and utterances to our own experiences, forms of understanding and interaction with the environment such that even the non-verbal aspects of language are understood based on shared beliefs.

With this overview on semantics, confusion tends to arise in the determination of the boundary between semantics and pragmatics as meaning negotiation processes. However, a brief clarification shall be made shortly in the following section.

2.5 PRAGMATICS

Pragmatics is a level of language which deals with the constraints the context places on how meanings of utterances are generated. It essentially deals with interpretation of utterances within a given discourse situation. Adegbija (1999:189), citing Barton (1990:6), is of the opinion that “pragmatics may be seen as the study of language use in particular communicative contexts or situations” as communicated and understood by the participants.

Pragmatics became prominent in the post 1960 linguistic investigation. It developed as an attempt to evolve an intensive understanding of the nature of language in consonance with functional usage at the interpersonal communicative level. As pointed out earlier semantics and pragmatics are linguistic fields which deal with meaning. While semantics deals with sentential meaning as property of expression at the logical, cognitive or conceptual level, pragmatics studies utterance meaning in relation to actual speech situation. It is against this background that Leech (1983) initiates the idea of ‘complementarism’ whose approach to meaning combines the duo – semantics and pragmatics – as intertwined domains of meaning explication.

Linguists like Austin (1962), Searle (1969) and Grice (1975) are particularly influential in drawing our attention to the essence of context in meaning negotiation (Adegbija, 1999:189). Kempson (1977:192) is of the view that the realms of metaphors, rhetoric and stylistics are constrained by pragmatics as it essentially investigates how context influences the generality of the ways we interpret utterances. In other words, pragmatics studies language use at a definite concrete level as opposed to universal ‘abstractions’ of semantics. Pragmatics concerns itself with the linguistic force conveyed by an utterance with reference to the entire speech situation which subsumes contextual variables as presupposition, implicature, participants, discourse, intention, mutual contextual beliefs (MCBs), speech acts and other related indices which concretize language use.

Overall, in pragmatics, the context of speech act plays a crucial role in allotting a narrow or pragmatic meaning to an utterance rather than the broad universal cognition in semantics with little or no reference to actual communicative situation.

3.0 LEVELS OF GRAMMATICAL ANALYSIS.

A sentence, considered as the largest grammatical stretch, subsumes all other levels of grammatical analysis. In the order of magnitude, a morpheme is the smallest grammatical element.

Morphemes join together to form words. In the same way, words are combined into phrases (or groups). In line with syntactic rules, phrases or groups generate into clauses. A clause may be main or

subordinate. If a clause is main, it qualifies as a simple sentence. In essence, one (main) or more (main and/or subordinate) clauses make a sentence. As we shall discuss shortly, a sentence, which is the maximum grammatical unit, makes a single complete statement which contains a finite verb. The grammatical rank scale is represented diagrammatically as follows – showing the interconnectedness of the various constituents:

3.1.1 MORPHOLOGY AND MORPHEMES

Morphology is simply the study of word forms in (English) language. It is concerned with the use of morphemes to form words. This entails that morphology is the linguistic investigation of the combination of morphemes. Morphemes, on the other hand, are the “minimal units of grammatical analysis, the units of lowest rank out of which words, the units of next ‘higher’ rank are composed” (Lyons, 1974:81).

In other words, a morpheme, the level of which is the smallest on the grammatical rank scale, is a minimal linguistic element with a unit of meaning. It is a minimal unit of meaning or grammatical function (Yule, 1985:60). A morpheme cannot be further divided into smaller grammatical (meaningful) components and it can function as any of the following elements in the structure of a word.

| | | |
|--------|---|---|
| BASE | - | <u>independence</u> |
| PREFIX | - | <u>irrevocable</u> |
| INFIX | - | <u>feet</u> (plural marker of - oo - in foot) |
| SUFFIX | - | <u>commander</u> |
| ENDING | - | <u>disappointments</u> |

A morph is the exponent of a morpheme, relating to the morpheme as an abstraction, with a morpheme itself being its realization (e.g. boys/bats with {s} being a morph in each). An allomorph is a family of morph, deriving from the fact that in English, certain morphemes or morphs change their nature from one word environment to the other. Allomorphs relate to the phonological aspects of grammatical analysis (Eka, 1994:53). For instance, the following are the allomorphic realizations of the {s} morpheme:

/s/ as in bats

/z/ as in toys

/iz/ as in bosses

There are majorly two types of morphemes: free and bound. The free morpheme, also known as the base or the root, is a word. It is independent in terms of meaning and form; it can stand on its own. Examples are school, man, stand, cup, etc. A bound morpheme, on the other hand, cannot stand on its own as it is subordinate to the free morpheme. Bound morphemes are the affixes which are either prefixes, infixes or suffixes.

While prefixes are bound morphemes 'affixed' to the beginning of words

(e.g. il - legal, dis - courage, mis - understand) and infixes are those inserted into the middle of words (e.g. men, feet, geese as against the root forms man, foot, goose), suffixes are bound morphemes that are added to the word endings (e.g. goodness, beautiful, correction, walked).

Bound morphemes can be sub-divided into two. These are inflectional and derivational morphemes, also called inflectional and derivational affixes. Inflectional morphemes are those affixes that do not change word classes. They indicate negation, diminution, number, gender and tense and they are usually prefixes and suffixes. Examples of inflectional morphemes are the underlined morphemes: (unimportant, impossible, booklet, boy/boys, box/boxes, lioness, princess, walk/walked, beat/beaten, etc). Derivational morphemes, however, change word classes as (as the term suggests) new word classes or parts of speech are 'derived' or developed through them. Examples of derivations are the underlined morphemes (e.g. beauty/beautiful, good/goodness,

play/playerer, strong/strongly).

Other types of morphemes identified by grammarians include full and empty morphemes, additive, replacive and zero morphemes. Full morphemes are elements that will later be identified as content words while empty morphemes are those that will be identified as grammatical words. Additive morphemes are affixes, added to the free morphemes. Replacive morphemes replace other morphemes (manager/managress, man/men, emperor/empress) while zero morphemes are 'unseen' morphemes (e.g fish, sheep, as plural nouns).

The following schema summarizes the various types of morphemes and their relationships:

3.1.2 MORPHOLOGICAL PROCESSES

Morphological processes, otherwise known as word formation processes are the major processes by which words are formed in language (Quirk, et. al, 1972; Odebunmi, 2001). The English word formation processes are Affixation, Compounding, Conversion Blending, Clipping, Reduplication, Acronymy/Abbronymy, Coinage/Nonce Formation, Back Formation, Neologism, and Borrowing.

These processes are discussed as follows:

3.1.2.1 Affixation

This is the process by which bound morphemes are added before, within or after the root/free morphemes. In other words, it is the process of word formation by prefixation, infixation and suffixation. Through this process, lexical and grammatical information is added to the sense of the root. As earlier adumbrated, prefixes change the meanings of the roots without altering their grammatical statuses. Infixes and suffixes mostly do not change the meanings of the roots or the base forms but give information about number, case, tense etc as they also change the grammatical classes of the base forms. An affix can be made up of a letter, two, three, four, five, six or even seven letters! The most commonly used affixes are prefixes and suffixes. Infixes are few and relatively new in morphological analysis.

Some prefixes and their meanings are the following:

| | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| a (not, without) as in | a moral, asymmetrical |
| ab (not), | abnormal |
| bi (twice, having two) as in | bicycle, bi-camera |
| contra (against) | contra-distinguish |
| counter (against) | counter-argue, counterplot |
| de (down from, away) as in | decamp, devalue, demystify |
| dis (apart, asunder, not) as in | disorganize, disbelief, dislodge |
| dys (ill, bad) as in | dysfunction, dyspepsia |

ex (former) as in ex-principal, ex-student
fore (before, in front) as in fore-tell, forecast, foreword
il, im, in, ir, un (not, against) as in illegal, impossible, insignificant, irresponsible, unnecessary

mal (ill, bad) as in maladjust, maladministration
Others include mis- (against), mono-(single), pan-(all), poly-(many), post-(after), pre-(before), pro-(for), pseudo-(false), re-(back, again), semi-(half), super-(above, over), tele-(at a distance)trans-(across, beyond) etc.

Infixes are also referred to as replacive morphemes as they tend to replace other morphemes/letters in the root form. They are mostly inflectional as they give grammatically information (i.e. number, tense, case). Examples are 'e', 'oo', 'o', 'ee', 'a' which all replace singular and present morphs in women, stood, wrote, teeth and sat, respectively.

Suffixes can be used as inflections or derivations. For instance, in 'girls' {s} is an inflectional suffix because it does not change the word class – a noun. But in 'beautiful', {ful} is a derivational suffix because it has changed the word class from the noun root to an adjective. Suffixes are classified into types, depending on their functions. These are Noun class, Verb class, Adjective class and Adverb class suffixes.

Noun class suffixes convert the base form (usually a verb or an adjective) to a noun. They include '-ance', '-ment', '-ier', '-er', '-or', '-ity', '-ist', '-ness', '-y', '-sion', '-ory', '-ry', '-ian', '-ism', etc as in appear+ance, govern+ment, cash+ier, teach+er, sail+or, total+ity, journal+ist, fair+ness, honest+y, revise+ion, observe+tory, slave+ry, politic+ian, capital+ism respectively.

Adjective class suffixes convert the base form (usually a noun or a verb) to adjectives. They include such examples as '-al', '-ic', '-ish', '-ible', '-able', '-ful', '-ous', '-less', '-lent', '-ive' etc as in option+al, Islam+ic, fool_ish, digest+ible, comfort+able, success+ful, comtempt+ous, fear+less, fraud+ulent and act+ive respectively.

Verb class suffixes change the root form (usually a noun or an adjective) to verbs. Examples of these are '-en', '-ify', '-ize', '-ate', etc as in glad+en, solid+ify, actual+ize and valid+ate respectively.

Adverb class suffixes also change the root form (often an adjective sometimes a noun) to adverbs. Examples are '-ly', '-ward', '-wise' as in smart+ly, way+ward, clock+wise respectively (see Okwilagwe, 1998: 63 – 90).

3.1.2.2 **Compounding**

Compounding involves the combination of two or more words. The combined forms can be with a hyphen or without it. Three types of compounds are identifiable: solid, hyphenated or two-word forms.

Solid compounds are classroom, grandchild, graveyard, hyphenated compounds are court-martial, frame-up, half-truth and two-word compounds are funny bone, gold plate, white house etc. To know what type is applicable or correct in a given context, a student needs to consult current dictionaries of English.

Compounds may be nouns such as carry-over, stronghold, off day, father-in-law, or adjectives such as off-guard, first-rate, run-of-the-mill chicken-hearted, or adverbs such as offhand, inside out, non-stop or verbs such as gainsay, leapfrog, jump-start etc.

3.1.2.3 **Conversion**

Conversion is the process of forming a new word from an existing word merely by changing the grammatical class of the latter word. Conversion may or may not involve the change of stress patterns. The same word assumes different classes in conversion. Examples of this include man (n), man (v), pencil (n), pencil (v), work (n), work (v), empty(v), empty (adj), graduate (n), graduate (v), graduate (adj).

3.1.2.4 **Blending**

In blending, two words are brought together to form a new word. It is a process that involves collapsing one form into the other.

Examples of blends are transistor (transfer + resistor), telecast (television + broadcast) motel (motor + hotel), forex (foreign + exchange), computeracy (computer + literacy), brunch (breakfast + lunch). In forming blends, either affixes or syllables of the words are removed to make the two words 'agreeable'.

3.1.2.5 **Clipping**

Clipping is the morphological process of word shortening to the effect that words retain their original meanings. It is different from abbreviation in the sense that a clip is not periodized as abbreviated forms are. Clipping is done essentially by removing initial and/or final syllables. An interesting example of clipping is in the word 'advertisement' which is clipped as 'advert' and then clipped further as 'ad'. Clipping arises from the innate tendency to economise words. Clips are mostly used in informal contexts. Other examples of clips are bus (omnibus), piano (pianoforte), flu (influenza), fridge (refrigerator), exam (examination), memo (memorandum), phone (telephone). Names are often shortened through the process of clipping. For example, Bola (Adebola), Chuks (Chukwumerije, Tim (Timothy), Abdul (Abdullahi) etc.

3.1.2.6 **Reduplication**

Reduplication is the process of repetition of words, a form of compounding. Reduplicatives are either partial or total. In partial reduplication, the two forms are slightly different from each other as only a letter or two changes. Examples of partial reduplicatives

are many, some of which are nitty-gritty, hurly-burly, helter-skelter, shilly-shally, criss-cross, dilly-dally, hubble-bubble, willy, nilly, riff-raff, nit-wit, tit-tat, rag-tag, tick-tock, kow-tow, hoity-toity, hocus-pocus, hobnob, chit-chat, higgledy-piggledy, etc. In total reduplication, on the other hand, the same form is repeated. Examples of total reduplicatives are not many, some of which include goody-goody, jaw-jaw, eye-eye, bye-bye, etc.

3.1.2.7 **Acronymy/abbronymy**

Acronymy is the process of word formation in which words are formed from the initial letters of phrases. This is also referred to as abbronymy, a blend of abbreviation and acronymy, by Odebunmi (cf. 2001:35) based on “the discovery that the two terms are difficult to tell from each other”. Acronyms/abbronyms are either simple or complex. They are simple when they are easily determinable from the phrases they represent. They are complex when they are not easily determinable from their full forms. Simple abbronyms are NEPA (National Electric Power Authority), ASUU (Academic Staff Union of Universities), SUG (Students Union Government) etc. Complex abbronyms, on the other hand, are FORTRAN (Formular Translator) NITEL (Nigerian Telecommunication Limited) COMSKIP (Communications Skills Project) etc.

3.1.2.8 **Nounce Formation/Coinage**

This is a morphological process by which a language user deliberately invents or accidentally uses a particular word in a particular context. If a speaker does not remember an exact word that can really express his thought, he coins an alternative word, known as “nounce form”. In writing, nounce forms or coined words are always enclosed in inverted commas to indicate their specific or special use. For example, David Crystal once wrote that a student who was having problems with linguistics said he was ‘linguistified’ to express how confounding the course was to him. Also, a particular lecturer was fond of putting a full stop after everything he wrote on the chalkboard. A student who wanted to explain his lecturer’s mannerism to his friend, falling short of words, said that his lecturer was ‘full stopmatic’!

3.1.2.9 **Back Formation**

Back formation is the process of shortening longer words by removing the suffixes. Back forms derive from bi-syllabic or polysyllabic words, especially agentive nouns, subsequently turned to the base forms. Examples of back forms are drive (from driver), office (from officer) assemble (from assemblance), debt (from debtor) revise (from revision), convert (from converter), etc.

3.1.2.10 **Neologism**

Neologism is the process in which old words are made to assume new senses because of relative semantic contiguity. In neologism, already established words are invested with new meanings. For example, let us consider Pyrrhic victory, Waterloo and marathon, the meanings of which are originally historical. Pyrrhus was the king of Epirus who had embarked on a number of military campaigns against Rome, Sicily and Asculum. He almost met his doom at the battle of Asculum in which he lost a substantial number of men and his ego was deflated, though he routed the Roman army. Victory attained at a very high cost thus becomes known as Pyrrhic victory. Waterloo was the name of the village in which the famous French conqueror, Napoleon Bonaparte was defeated; hence, to meet one's Waterloo is to meet one's downfall. Marathon originally means a distant town where a Roman soldier ran to; hence, a long distance race on foot. By neologism, it is now any activity which consumes energy over a long period (e.g. marathon lecture).

3.1.2.11 **Borrowing**

Borrowing involves taking lexical items from one language to another. Borrowed words are known as loan words which are made to adapt to the phonological structure, more or less, of the borrower (English) language. English has many loan words from virtually all languages. Examples include restaurant (French), mosquito (Spanish), mammoth (Russian), alcohol (Arabic), tea (Chinese) just to mention a few.

3.1.3 **MORPHEMIC ANALYSIS AND SEGMENTATION**

Morphemic analysis is the description of morphemic components of words. It accounts for the configuration of morphemic elements. Since a word is always made up of one or more morphemes, it is pertinent to reiterate that root is the core of that word. When the root of a word is identified, then, the stem and other affixes are determined. The stem is the part of a word remaining after all inflectional affixes have been removed (you may wish to revise inflectional and derivational morphemes in section 3.0). In 'bearable' for instance, 'bear' is the root. But when we say 'unbearable', 'bearable' is the stem because while 'un' is inflectional, and hence removed, 'able' is derivational, hence retained in the stem. In **foolishness**, fool is the root, foolish is the stem and 'ness' is the suffix (cf Ofuya, 1996:4).

Morphemic analysis also involves segmentation of morphemes into their appropriate components. Consider the following examples.

| | | |
|----------------|-----------------------------|---------|
| Simplification | simpl(e) = if (y) + ication | (f+b+b) |
| Ungratefulness | un+grateful+ness | (b+f+b) |

| | | |
|------------------|-------------------------|---------|
| Dislocations | dis+locat(e) + ion + | |
| s (b+f+b+b) | | |
| Fathers-in-law | father+s+in+law | (f+b+f |
| +f) | | |
| Segmentability | segment+able+ity | (f+b+b) |
| Travelled | travel+ed | (f+b) |
| Went | go+ed | (f+b) |
| Incomprehensible | in+comprehen(d)+(s)ible | (|
| b+f+b) | | |

It is important to note that a root is a root because it can function as an independent meaningful unit. If it loses meaning, it is no longer **root**. For instance, words like receive, deceive, achieve, conceive may superficially suggest two morphemes, each. But they are just single roots because the second syllables have no meanings.

3.2.0 WORDS: TYPES AND CLASSES

This is the grammatical level next above that of morpheme. Like blocks with which buildings are built, words are the units with which language is constructed. Words constitute the component parts of language and they are made up of morphemes, free and bound. The term, "word" is defined as "the smallest unit of language that people can understand if it is said or written on its own" (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 1995: 1648). As a unit of meaning without which communication is impossible, every word must engender a sense prompted by general or specific determinism.

The knowledge of the meaning of individual word in a sentence is instrumental to the understanding of the sentence as the focus of grammar. A root with one morpheme qualifies as a word. At the same time, a word may contain more than one morpheme. Hence, a word equals to a morpheme e.g. boy, kill; or more than one morpheme e.g. boy/s, kill/ed, under/develop/ment/s.

Grammatically, a word plays the part of the element or one of the elements in the structure of a phrase or a group. For instance,

My best friend (-is gone)

is a noun phrase/group and it has three words whose grammatical slot can be filled by a word, at the same time, as we have in:

John (- is gone)

From the foregoing, the levels of morpheme and word are intertwined. This explains why a word would have a structure which comprises one or more of the morphemal elements: base, prefix, infix, suffix and ending with 'the base' being the obligatory element. Hence, the grammatical level of word serves as a strong basis for grammatical realization, description and analysis.

Words are of three types, according to their morphemic components. A simple word is a single free morpheme. For example, car, girl, school, country are simple words. Complex words, on the hand, are a combination of a free morpheme with one or more bound morphemes. Examples like international, education, examination, disqualification, mismanagement are complex words. Compound words, however, are made up of two or more free morphemes, whether hyphenated or not. Compound words include classmate, mother-in-law, edition-in-chief, feeding-bottle, homework, town hall, etc. It would be observed that compound words may be hyphenated, written separately as two words or combined without a hyphen as the examples above show. As noted by Ofuya (1996:5), “there are no hard and fast rules concerning the writing of compound words”.

Also, words also have their classes, traditionally known as parts of speech. The word classes are eight in number and they are Noun, Pronoun, Verb, Adverb, Adjective, Preposition, Conjunction and Interjection. These eight classes are categorized as Content and Grammatical words. Content words, also known as lexical words are four: noun, verb, adverb and adjective. These belong to the open class system because the elements contained in them are inexhaustible. The grammatical words are pronoun, preposition, conjunction and interjection that all belong to the closed class, the members of which are not many. We shall briefly discuss the word classes to serve the purpose of revision.

3.2.1 **NOUN**

Noun are often defined as the names of people animals, places and things. But nouns also cover such names of institutions, days, months and other abstract entities. Characteristically, most nouns form their plural with - s, es, or ies suffixes though irregular plural formation exists. They are often preceded by articles, demonstratives and they form their possessive case with the

addition of 's' suffix preceded by an apostrophe in the singular and ended by the apostrophe in the plural. More often than not, the following morphemes end nouns: - ity, - age, - ist, - hood, - ship, - ness, - er, - or, - ment, - tion, - sion, - ster, - ery, - ice, as in ability, drainage, journalist, brotherhood, kinship, kindness, driver, survivor, judgement, correction, revision, trickster, jewelry and cowardice.

Noun types include Proper Nouns, Common Nouns, Collective Nouns and Abstract Nouns. Nouns are further classified as countable/ count or uncountable/mass. Proper nouns are specific to their referents and are started with capital letters in writing.

Busayo, Iwo, Bingo, Sobi Rock, *The Comet* are particular names of a person, place, animal and things (rock and newspaper) Common nouns are general as they refer to a class of entities. The uniqueness in proper nouns is not in common nouns, examples of which are baby, street, cutlass, etc. Collective nouns are names of groups; a collective noun is made of a collection of more than one entity. Examples include committee, family, congregation, crowd. Abstract nouns relate to ideas, feelings, emotions and concepts that cannot be seen or touched. Abstract nouns are philosophy, beauty, happiness, etc. The difference between countable nouns like stick, pen, house, boy can be counted but uncountable nouns like bread, sugar, water, sand cannot be so counted. To make mass nouns countable, there is a method, as shown in the following examples:

Two loaves of bread
Seven cubes of sugar
Eight cups of water
Four loads of sand.

Nouns function as subject of sentence (Olu is a boy) object of a verb (I killed the snake), complement of subject (my lecturers are professors) complement of object (They call some female students prostitutes) and complement of preposition (He brought the book from London). Gerunds, also called verbal nouns, also function as nouns. They are formed by adding 'ing' to verbs. Singing, writing, dancing are gerunds when used as nouns.

3.2.2 PRONOUN

Pronoun are words used to represent nouns and as such, they function as nouns. The various types of pronouns are exemplified as follows:

Personal pronouns: I, we, you, he, she, it, they (as subjects)
me, us, you, him, her, it, them (as objects)

Possessive pronouns: my, our, your, his, her, its, their
(adjectives)

mine, ours, yours, his, hers, theirs (pronouns)

(Possessive pronouns are sometimes called pronominal adjectives because they do function as adjectives).

Reflexive pronouns: myself, ourselves, yourself, himself, herself, itself, themselves.

Emphasizing pronouns: These are reflective pronouns when used for emphasis (e.g. I, myself, am the victor).

Reciprocal pronouns: each other, one another

Demonstrative pronouns: This, that (singular)
These, those (plural)

Interrogative pronouns: Who, what, why, how, when, whose, which, etc. (as questions) .

Relative pronouns: Who, whom, which, whose, that, how, where, when, how, (as subordinate clause markers).

Indefinite pronouns: anybody, anyone, anything, somebody, someone, something, everybody, everyone, everything, few, little, many, much, several.

3.2.3 VERB

A verb is the word that tells what a subject does or expresses a state of being. Deriving from the Latin 'verbum' meaning 'the word', it is the most important element or word in a sentence. The meaning of a sentence is not complete without the verb. 'Write', 'come', 'jump', 'stop' are examples of verbs.

Verbs are classified as either main/lexical or auxiliary. The main verbs can stand alone as the verb element. Auxiliary verbs are of two types: primary and modal. While primary auxiliary verbs function as lexical verbs or just as 'helping' verbs, the modal auxiliary verbs do not. Primary auxiliary verbs are copular verbs (e.g. is, was, are, were, etc) and anomalous verbs (has, have, had)

and modals are just thirteen (can, could, may, might, shall, should, will, would, must, ought to, used to, need and dare).

Other typologies of verbs are: regular (those that take ‘- ed’ to form their past and past participle forms, (e.g. walk, walked, talk, talked,) and irregular verbs (those that have other ways of forming past and past participles forms, e.g. break, broke, broken; beat, beat, beaten; cut, cut, cut); finite (those limited to the subject in number and person – by showing tense and agreement, e.g. The Man died, The sun shines everyday) and non-finite verbs (those infinitives, verbal noun and participle forms that neither show tense nor constitute verbal elements in sentences, e.g. she wants to pass, the boy loves reading poems, frozen food is my choice). Transitive, (those that require direct objects, e.g. kill, beat) and intransitive verbs (those that require no objects to make their meanings complete, e.g. die, sit, fall).

3.2.4 ADVERB

An adverb is a word that modifies or tells us more about a verb or any other word class. Most adverbs are formed by affixing ‘ly’ to adjectives (e.g. slowly, quickly, quickly) while others do not have specific ending (always, quite, very, well, hard, etc). Depending on what questions they answer, there are adverbs of manner (answering ‘how’), adverbs of place (answering ‘where’) and adverbs of time (answering ‘when’). Functionally, adverbs modify verbs (e.g. Tolu sang happily), adjectives (e.g. my daughter is very beautiful), other adverbs (e.g. They arrived quite early) and prepositional phrases (e.g. The students talk always in the library).

Adverbs are generally of three types. These are Adjuncts, Disjuncts and Conjuncts. Adjuncts give information about how, where, when and to what extent the action of the verb is done. Disjuncts express the feeling or viewpoint of the speaker (strangely, she passed; honestly, we are guilty). Conjuncts join two clauses or sentences together in meaning. Examples of these are, moreover, meanwhile, however, similarly and other ‘paragraph linker’s.

3.2.5 ADJECTIVE

An adjective is a word that qualifies a noun or a pronoun.

Grammarians have identified adjectives on the basis of their semantic weight viz dynamic/stative adjectives (e.g. wonderful, active/tall, small), gradable/ non-gradable adjectives (e.g. young, old/shut, open) and inherent/non-inherent adjectives (e.g. a new car, a fine building/an old friend, a new vice chancellor) (see Ofuya, 1987:98 – 100).

Adjectives are attributive when they pre-modify or appear before nouns. ‘Young’ and ‘handsome governor’ are attributive

adjectives. Predicative adjectives, known as complements, complete the meaning of verbs, 'Happy' and 'good' are used predicatively in 'we are happy' and 'I look good'. Adjectives are known as post-modifiers when they occur immediately after the element (noun or pronoun) that they qualify. (e.g The man expected is around; the money available was spent). Also, Adjectives also function as nouns when they head the noun phrases. For example, The strong away oppress the weak, the rich despise the poor and the needy.

Comparing adjectives takes place at three levels or degrees: positive, comparative and superlative. Regular comparison is achieved by affixing '- er', and '- est' to the simple forms or by adding 'more' and 'most' before the adjectives. Irregular comparison, on the other hand, does not follow the given pattern. The following examples have irregular comparison: good, better, best; many, more, most; bad, worse, worst. (See Ogunsanwo et al. 1993: 191).

Cardinal and ordinal numerals are also used as adjectives often, if they do function as nouns. Cardinal numbers are one, two, three, four, etc while ordinal numbers are first, second, third, fourth, etc. Apart from the numerical adjectives, other adjectives can be proper (e.g. Nigerian soldiers), articles (e.g. the, a, an) possessive nouns (e.g Wumi's book) pronouns (This hat, some people, my bag and which chair).

3.2.6 PREPOSITION

Prepositions are locative words that express the relationship between words in sentences. Prepositions are marked by their rigid nature: they do not take inflections. In other words, while the previous word classes can be pluralised compared as the case may be with affixes, the same cannot apply to prepositions. Most prepositions are just one word elements though those that are more than one word exist. In many instances, prepositions introduce adverbial and adjectival phrases.

Examples of prepositions, which generally belong to the closed system, are: at, on, off, from, after before, against, throughout, along with, due to, away from, etc. In addition to functioning like adverbs and adjectives, prepositional phrases, or groups of words headed by prepositions also do function verb complements as well as adjective complements.

3.2.7 CONJUNCTION

A conjunction, just as the word implies, joins words or groups of words together. Usually, conjunctions join structures of the same

grammatical statuses together: words with words, phrases with phrases, clauses with clauses and perhaps, sentences with sentences. Examples of conjunctions are: and, but, or, yet, as etc. There are, at least, four types of conjunctions. Coordinating conjunctions specifically join words of the same rank. The common examples are: and, or and but. Correlative conjunctions are used in pairs. Examples are both... and, not only... but (also), either... or, neither... not. While semi-coordinating conjunctions include groups such as, as well as, rather than, more, than, as much as etc, subordinating conjunctions, which introduce subordinate clauses, include: although, as, because, before, if, in order that, since, so that, unless, until, etc.

3.2.8 INTERJECTION

The least important of word classes, interjections are words or sounds with which strong emotions of joy, sadness, anxiety, disgust, etc are expressed. Interjections are always followed by exclamation marks. Examples of interjections are Alas! Waoh! Yee! Oh God! etc. Understanding, the functional use of interjections make us appreciate them better. Imagine the following scenario: There was a final match between a Nigerian team and a foreign side. After a dreary eighty-nine minutes full of suspense and wasted opportunities on the two sides, a Nigerian striker just lobbed the ball into the opponent's net, a few seconds to the end of the match. A flat, drab and emotionless 'It's a goal' would almost be criminal. The mood of the moment would normally dictate a thunderous outburst "Waoh! It is a g-o-a-l!"

3.3 PHRASE/GROUP

The next level above a word on the grammatical rank scale is a phrase. A phrase is a word or a group of words that together have a particular meaning grammatically. A phrase may identify a referent, indicate the action of, modify, qualify or complement grammatical elements in sentences. Some of the phrases in English are noun phrase, (NP), verb phrase (VP), adjectival phrase (ADJP), adverbial phrase (ADVP) and prepositional phrase (PP). Examples of some of these phrases are marked in the constructions that follow.

| | | |
|------|---|---|
| NP | - | <u>The boy</u> is <u>my friends</u> |
| VP | - | She <u>must have been</u> there before now |
| ADJP | - | <u>The tall elegant young looking</u> lady |
| ADVP | - | Locomotive trains move <u>very slowly</u> |
| PP | - | Abdul is relaxing <u>in the garden</u> now. |

In systemic grammar, the idea of "groups" is used in place of "phrases". Each element in the structure of a clause qualifies as a group/phrase, namely: S (subject), P (predicator), C (complement),

A (Adjunct). For example:

The implication here is that there are four different groups/phrases in the sentence: ///The tall boy here/can do/the work of ten/before dusk/// which has just been analyzed.

3.4 **CLAUSE**

An adequate knowledge of the clause allows language users, or students specifically, to have a grasp of the internal structures of a sentence. A clause is a major part of a sentence which should contain a predicator. The subject is also an integral part of a clause, essentially a noun phrase. A clause must have a finite verb which distinguishes it from a phrase. Since the finite verb constitutes the predicator, it becomes an obligatory element in the structure of a clause.

Notionally, a clause is described as a group of words containing a subject and a predicate of its own and forming part of a sentence.

For example:

Bola laughed

If you will do it

Note that the underlined elements are the predicators in the two clauses. A clause can either be main/free/independent or subordinate/ bound/ dependent. A clause is different from a phrase as it has the structure of a simple sentence like S (subject), V (verb), C (complement), O (object), A (adjunct) or S (subject), P (predicator), C (complement), A (adjunct) depending on the grammatical model employed.

Clauses are generally divided into two main and subordinate. The main clause is independent as it qualifies on its own as a simple sentence.

Subordinate clauses are majorly of three types: noun/nominal, adjectival and adverbial clauses. A nominal clause functions like a noun phrase or noun. The basic feature is that it has a finite verb (e.g. *How he passed* really surprised me). An adjectival clause also functions like an adjective and is usually introduced by relative pronouns (e.g. The man *who became the president in 1999* has won a second term) exemplified under section 3.2.

Adverbial clauses also function as adverbs. Various types of adverbial clauses include: adverbial clauses of reason, purpose, result, time, place, degree, condition, concession, comparison, etc. The tree diagram which follows will illustrate part of these ideas in the sentence made up of a subordinate adverbial clause of condition and a main clause:

If I have my way, I will leave this country.

3.5 SENTENCE

From the traditional perspective, the sentence is defined as a group of words comprising a subject and a predicate and which makes a complete sense. However, if one carries out a detailed analysis of this view, one will find out that the definition is not watertight. For example, one would ordinarily give a “No” answer to the question: “Is that your heart in your hand?” The response “No” is considered as a sentence and it naturally defies the traditional perception of what a sentence is. The same is applicable to completeness of expressions like “come” and “get out”. This opinion necessitated many scholarly and philosophical definitions whose baseline contains the following:

- A sentence is a word or a group of words which starts with a capital letter and ends with a fullstop (.), a question mark (?) or an exclamation mark (!).
- It is the largest unit of grammatical description.
- It usually (but not in all cases) contains a subject and a predicate.
- It should be grammatically complete and independent such that it possesses a degree of semantic independence.

There are different types of sentences owing to their structural constituents these are:

Simple sentence: This is a mono-clausal sentence. It has the feature of a main clause e.g. Wale is here.

Compound sentence: This is characterized by two main clauses linked together by coordinating conjunction e.g. I can do it but I won't.

Complex sentence: This sentence has one main and one or more subordinate clauses e.g. I am travelling tomorrow because I need some money.

Compound-complex sentence: This sentence type consists of two main clauses and one or more subordinate clauses e.g. John drove down the street but he could not fuel the car because he had no money.

Multiple sentence: This comprises three or more main clauses without any subordinate clause e.g. He was taught, he was attentive but he failed the examination.

Multiple-complex sentence: This sentence type comprises at least three main clauses and one or more subordinate clauses. E.g. I came, I saw and I conquered although it was tasking.

English sentences are also classified functionally. A sentence is made to perform any of the following functions.

Declarative sentence: These are statements. They normally

assert the truth or falsity of a thing and their subjects precede their respective predicates. e.g.

The boy is my friend

They cannot go now

Interrogative sentence: These sentences ask direct questions which demand some sorts of response from the addressee. However, it could be rhetorical in some cases. The syntactic arrangement is normally characterized by inversion of subject and predicate order e.g.

Is that my pen?

Where are you going?

Imperative sentences: They command, direct or make request. These sentences do not normally have overt grammatical subject while their verbs are in imperative mood e.g.

(You) Go to bed.

(My boy) Please, come here.

Exclamatory sentences: They express strong feelings of surprise or pain e.g. What a memorable day!

An exclamatory sentence can also be a single word which functions in the capacity of a sentence.

e.g. What! Hurrah! Stop!

4.0 **CONCLUSION**

A good language user must know and at the same time obey the rules governing grammatical and correct sentences in the language in question. The grammaticality of sentences starts from correct choices of morphemal elements combined to form them. Similarly, these 'grammatical' sentences need to be correct and appropriate. The ability to formulate such sentences requires not only the knowledge of language (competence) but how to use it effectively. The implication here is that the context of meaning, as essence of communication, determines appropriateness and correctness of seemingly abstract concerns of grammar in concrete situation of language use.

In this chapter, after introducing language and its component levels of study we have attempted to highlight the basic elements of grammar, especially the morpheme and the word, which constitute the bricks with which language is built. The knowledge of word formation and word classes is no doubt central to the effective use of words in higher ranks of grammatical analysis. Apart from defining grammar and examining levels of linguistic investigation from phonology, morphology, syntax to semantics and pragmatics, we have focused on morphemes and word formation processes. And by reviewing word classes and types, phrases, clauses and sentences, it is foregrounded that without words, there

is no grammar; and without grammar, language loses its essence, indeed, its purpose, as it becomes just, as William Shakespeare would put it: "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing".

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